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Votes pouring in for Kentucky's new brand

FRANKFORT, Ky. (October 27, 2004) – More than 10,000 people cast ballots for their favorite Kentucky brand in the first 24 hours of voting, officials said today.

Gov. Ernie Fletcher announced the brand rollout and invited the public to vote during a Tuesday luncheon at the Kentucky Tourism Industry Annual Conference in Covington, and online voting had passed the 10,000 mark by 1 p.m. Wednesday. "The people are responding in a big way, and that's exactly what we had hoped for," said Governor Fletcher. "The final outcome will be one in which the public's voice is heard."

Kentucky residents and non-residents alike visiting www.kentucky.gov may vote for one of four brands, each including a logo and a slogan. They also may vote at the state's welcome centers, state resort parks, the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, the Kentucky History Center in Frankfort and the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea. For those who cannot vote online or at one of the voting sites, they may simply state their preference and mail it to:

Brand Kentucky
Kentucky State Capitol
700 Capitol Avenue
Frankfort, KY 40601

At the end of each of three voting cycles – Nov. 5, Nov. 12, and Nov. 21 – the brand receiving the fewest votes will be eliminated. Gov. Fletcher will announce the winning brand on Nov. 24.

The four brands were designed by New West, a Louisville-based public relations, advertising and marketing agency, under contract with the Fletcher administration to create a statewide brand, or image campaign, and to develop a comprehensive marketing and advertising plan for all state cabinets, plus the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

Reaction to the process has been overwhelmingly positive.

"Our industry's been struggling for the last several years, so I'm excited that this is a new direction," said D. Ray Gillespie, Executive Director of the Kentucky Hotel & Lodging Association. "And I think it's been so well done. You can't help but be enthused about it."

Until now, Gillespie said, "Kentucky's entire promotions program has been so divided, so fractioned, that it's been less than effective. So it seems to me that with this kind of concerted effort, we ought to have a great deal more opportunity to bring economic development to the state."

Francie Robinson, working a booth at the tourism conference for *Travel & Leisure* magazine in Chicago, said she liked the brand choices. "I particularly liked one with the horse because when you think of Kentucky you think of the Derby, if you're from out of state, at least. It's got some great color schemes, very pretty. Someone put a lot of time and effort into creating some different images to choose and I think it will do good. It will pop out in a magazine."

Eric Lukehart of *Southern Living* magazine said development of a state brand is "a good first step to uniting. I don't think it's as simple as a logo being able to do everything, but I do think it's a good start. Whatever is chosen, I hope it's something that will stick for a number of years, as other states have shown that sticking with that brand is very important."

Sherry Murphy, Executive Director of the Elizabethtown Tourism & Convention Bureau and President of the Kentucky Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus, said the concept of unifying Kentucky's message is based on solid research. "The first thing I think we all learn when we start with promotions is repeat, repeat, repeat, because that's the thing that kind of hits home with people. If we can get everyone to tie in to this we're going to really get a lot of bang for our bucks."

Gary White, president and CEO of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association, praised the decision to let the public have its say. "What a great direction it is to take this type of thing to the people, and let them make the decision on how they want their state to be marketed through the brand," he said. "So you avoid one person, one group, one organization coming out with a single slogan or a brand, as has perhaps happened in the past."

More information about the brands, including the rationale behind each one, a background on how the branding campaign came about, and updated news on the campaign, is available at www.kentucky.gov.

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